16663

A LETTER TO NOBODY;

ON THE

NEGLIGENCE and MISCONDUCT

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERIORS,

AND PARTICULARLY OF

A MODERN BISHOP.

By SULPICIUS SEVERUS.

LONDON,
Printed for G. KEARSLY, in Fleet-ſtreet.
MDCCLXXV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A LETTER TO NOBODY.

NOBODY will be pleaſed to hear that the reputation of that religion, which is eſtabliſhed in England, is now moſt grievouſly injured by ſome, who are the beſt paid for the profeſſion and ſupport of it; unleſs he ſhould happen to be a ſingular phænomenon in this enlightened age, a ſtrange creature indeed, an Infidel or an Atheiſt.

Nobody can obſerve with any ſatisfaction the numerous inſtances of negligence and miſconduct, which bring diſcredit on the epiſcopal character, who has not a ſecret wiſh, that the delinquency may be enlarged to a criminal enormity, and by a perverſeneſs of imputation make the order itſelf deteſtable.

Nobody, however, need attempt to controvert the matter, and invalidate the accuſation of negligence and miſconduct, who is not able to produce arguments ſtrong enough to deſtroy the moſt glaring evidence of facts.

Nobody, therefore, it is hoped, will condemn the author at ſight, for preſuming to addreſs a letter to him on a ſubject of ſome importance, if the goſpel may not be given up as a divine revelation. In ſhort, Nobody can be juſtly offended at the ſeverity of the following reflections, who ſeriouſly conſiders, that all the language in the world cannot compoſe ſo libellous a burleſque on religion as a miſbehaving beneficiary.

"But the novelty of an addreſs to Nobody! what ludicrous deriſion! what a profane and farcical miſrepreſentation of matters muſt it be!" —Was this only the private exclamation of ſome fleecy-faced doctor in divinity, a contemptuous ſilence would be *argumentum ad hominem*, and better than any other: but the pure in ſpirit may have their apprehenſions; and it would be ſinning abſurdly, to offend the meaneſt among the little ones, who are actually engaged in the practice of piety.

Now the firſt argument in favour of an addreſs to Nobody derives its force from the apoſtolical

apoſtolical precept, *Abſtain from all appearance of evil.* And how this is to be done in any epiſtolary petition, and yet obſerve the forms which the luxuriancy of modern compliment has made neceſſary, ſeems to require all Eliſha's ſhare of inſpiration to underſtand. But as this is a ſpecies of defence, it may be of ſervice to produce authorities. Such as had rather learn morality from ſermons, and would be glad to know how nearly related to the ſin of lying many faſhionable profeſſions of reſpect are theologically eſteemed, may be referred to Barrow and Tillotſon, and an innumerable liſt of luminaries in the galaxy of preachers: yet for the ſake of thoſe who are not ſolicitous whether they receive good advice from one in lawn or common linen, it will not perhaps be quite unentertaining to tranſcribe a paragraph or two from the learned Le Clerc; whoſe liberality of ſentiment was ſo noble and manly, one would wiſh it was found at this time more admired and leſs peculiar: they are taken from his dedication of what remains of Menander and Philemon to the very celebrated A. A. Cooper, Earl of Shafteſbury. "Nunc Europæi "omnes melioris educationis culturæque in- "genii indicium eſſe putant, ſi ſe invicem ho- "norificis verbis, pro ſorte quemque ſua, ad-

 "pellent;

" pellent; ruſticitatiſque continuo damnatur,
" quiſquis ejuſmodi verborum ambagibus ſatis
" dextre uti neſcit. Hinc nata conſuetudo
" unius hominis, dignitate nequaquam ſuperio-
" ris, plurali numero compellandi, nec ſingulari
" unquam utendi; niſi forte adverſus amiciſ-
" ſimos aut multo inferiores. Hinc mira illa
" loquendi genera, *Dominatio, Excellentia, Cel-*
" *ſitudo, Serenitas, Majeſtas*, et olim etiam, la-
" bente imperio, *divinitas veſtra*, aliaque id
" genus, quæ indies nova inveniuntur et quæ
" utramque paginam faciunt, à multis jam ſæ-
" culis, in ſcriptis, quibus ſingulos homines
" alloquimur; cùm ſolerent olim Græci mono-
" ſyllabâ voculâ Σὺ et Romani ſuâ, indè natâ,
" *Tu*, addito nomine proprio, omnes adpellare,
" etiam reges ac Cæſares; quos ſolo nomine
" dignitatis, βασιλέας vel αὐτοκράτορας ſalutabant.
" Hæc aliaque, ſi bene penſitentur, ut optime,
" Vir Nobiliſſime, judicabas, non libertatis
" tantùm ſed humanitatis imminutæ clara ſunt
" indicia. Nos tamen, quaſi in eâ re veteribus
" cultiores, hanc *civilitatem* vocamus; nomine
" quo aliud prorſus ſignificabatur apud Roma-
" nos, cùm *civilis animus* is eſſet qui ſupra
" civis ſortem non ſapiebat, et *civilitas* virtus
" ejus, qui cum civibus inſtar civis verſa-
" batur, licet dignitate et opibus eos anteiret.

" Sed

" Sed difficiles in ejuſmodi verbis, quæ [a] uſus " jamdudum emollivit et neceſſaria fecit, nos " eſſe non oportet. Utinam modò libertas, " hoc eſt, legitimis et æquis legibus ſolis pa- " rendi neceſſitas, ubique vigeret! Utinam lo- " quendi ſcribendique, ſi ita videretur, ea ubi- " que omnibus fieret poteſtas, quà, quæcunque " nec rectæ rationi nec cœleſti revelationi con- " traria eſſent, et dicere et in publicum edere " liceret! Utinam diſceptare de rebus dubiis " ac obſcuris non haberetur paſſim ſcelus divi- " nis, ut vulgus putat, humaniſque legibus dam- " natum et exquiſitis ſuppliciis expiandum! " Verùm ne apud Græcos quidem olim et Ro- " manos ea fuit, hiſce in rebus, libertas, quæ " eſſe debuit; quamquam multò major erat, " quam uſquam hodie, ut ex contrariis philoſo- " phorum ſectis, quarum nulla tamen erat ve- " tita, intelligere poſſumus."

But would it not have been more proper, if the guilt of any Eccleſiaſtics be in reality

[a] One of the fineſt writers among the Romans, and an excellent judge, both of books and men, has obſerved with his uſual perſpicuity and correctneſs,

" Nedum ſermonum ſtet honos et gratia vivax:
" Multa renaſcentur, quæ jam cecidere; cadentque
" Quæ nunc ſunt in honore vocabula; ſi volet uſus,
" Quem penes arbitrium eſt et jus et norma loquendi."

Hor. Ep. ad Piſones.

great enough to be complained of, would it not have been more decently reſpectful to have made application with deference and humble ſubmiſſion to the moſt reverend the Metropolitans? It is their duty, it muſt be their inclination, to ſupport the dignity and diſcipline of the church in their reſpective provinces.—'Tis true they have been told ſo; they have ſaid ſo; they have ſworn ſo; and charity, that believeth all things, may believe ſo.—But the facility of obtaining a diſpenſation with a preamble ready made for every character; the facility of converting the largeſt and richeſt benefice into a ſinecure, at the annual expence of a ſmall ſtipend; the facility of conſolidating livings, that a fortunate beneficiary may hold four in fact and only two in form; the facility of purchaſing the [b] Reſignation of ſome incum-

[b] Or elſe many an advertiſement even of late muſt have been inſerted in vain. Let me ſelect one from the London Evening Poſt of April 21, 1774:

ADVOWSONS.

To be SOLD,

The Perpetual Advowſons of two Rectories, contiguous to each other, in a very *fruitful* and *pleaſant* country, and near to the Metropolis. An immediate reſignation of the moſt valuable Rectory.

For further particulars, enquire of Mr. Henry Townley Ward, Attorney, Henrietta-ſtreet, Covent-garden.

bents

bents at a fair brokerage, and without incurring the pains and penalties canonically denounced againſt ſimony; the facility of taking orders, without learning, without virtue, without even the moſt unaccountable of all qualifications, a degree in arts or the civil law; the facility of framing apologies for non-reſidence, and a ſecularized ſort of clerical life; the facility of ſeveral evaſions, without any more than a private imputation of perjury; has been complained of at ſundry times, and in divers manners, both under a proteſtant and a papal hierarchy: and all to no purpoſe. For at every period it might be truly aſſerted,

" Et fas atque neſas miſtum legeſque per ipſas
" Sævit nequities: pœnas jam noxia vincit [c]."

The cloud of witneſſes accumulated by length of time hath, however, ſo overſhadowed the archiepiſcopal dignity, that in ſome views it appears a monſtrouſly deformed figure; and, if it had but a pall on, one would really take it for a Roman Antique, with a Prayer-book in one hand, and a purſe in the other. An appeal therefore to Nobody is juſt as good as an appeal to the Pope, who is next to Nobody;

[c] Manilii Aſtronomicon, lib. ii.

or as an appeal to that Metropolitan, who is next to the Pope: and for the ſame reaſon:

" Quid juvat in ſemet ſua per convitia ferri?"

This trifle then cannot fare worſe than the moſt ſerious and ſolemn and pathetic appeals have fared before it; and ſhould it be introduced at a convivial hour, when ſmall-talk and trifling may be allowable in the way of relief; for moſt people are of the poet's opinion, who gave this advice to his friend, the famous Virgil,

" Miſce ſtultitiam conſiliis brevem:
" Dulce eſt deſipere in loco."

Should it be introduced, I ſay, at ſuch a juncture, perhaps it will be received with as much politeneſs and reſpect as if it had been intituled, " A Deſcription of the preſent Epiſcopal Cha-" racter, taken from Life, and dedicated with-" out permiſſion to the Primate of all England."

Some indeed may imagine the failure, or even the repeated failures, of an appeal to the Premier of Eccleſiaſtics, in any age or country, ſhould not totally intimidate petitioners for a redreſs of grievances; but rather make them exert their endeavours with a more reſolute ſteadineſs in every other lawful way: and in this caſe, the next advance is obvious; an appeal

peal to the clergy at large, repreſentatively aſſembled in council. But they ſhould conſider that an attempt of this ſort is in a manner become impracticable now in England: for, by the good providence of God, the two houſes of convocation have, for ſome time, ſunk into inſignificance, exiſting only as creatures of ſtate, like the dukes of Normandy and Aquitain. And if Engliſhmen will not allow it the greateſt, they cannot deny that it has been the moſt durable, of all the bleſſings, which they can boaſt of receiving from the auſpicious influence of the Brunſwick family. And this is not a novel opinion. Nazianzen, Gregory the Great, and many other fathers of diſtinction among the Primitives, thought ſo too. They knew by woeful experience, what rancorous animoſities, what bitter implacable perſonal antipathies, what cruel perſecutions, what barbarous maſſacres, what flames of fiery zeal, had been raiſed by the anathematizing ſpirit and contradictory decrees of different ſynods; which were held in ſuch a haſty ſucceſſion for ſeveral centuries, that the whole Chriſtian world was a continued ſcene of diſcord and confuſion. Nobody, that has read the very worſt compendium of Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, can be quite ignorant what an everlaſting evil derives its origin from the famous

famous creed-making council of Nice. The ſtandard of orthodoxy was then erected, and the faith of every Chriſtian reduced to a common meaſure. A fair and explicit confeſſion would not do, would not paſs for catholic, unleſs delivered *in verbis totidem literiſque etiam.* The following letter, which Arius, the renowned Preſbyter, and Euzoïus, a Deacon of Alexandria, afterwards Biſhop of Antioch, wrote to Conſtantine the Great, will ſufficiently corroborate this remark :

Τῷ εὐσεβεςάτῳ καὶ θεοφιλεςάτῳ δεσπότῃ ἡμῶν Κωνςαντίνῳ, Ἄρειος καὶ Εὐζώϊος πρεσβύτεροι.

Καθὼς προσέταξεν ἡ θεοφιλής σε εὐσέβεια, δέσποτα βασιλεῦ, ἐκλιθέμεθα τὴν ἑαυτῶν πίςιν ἐγγράφως· ὁμολογοῦμεν ἐπὶ Θεοῦ ἕτω πιςεύειν, καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ πάντες οἱ σὺν ἡμῖν, ὡς ὑπολέταχται. Πιςεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεὸν, Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, καὶ Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριςὸν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, τὸν ἐξ αὐτοῦ πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων γεγεννημένον· Θεὸν λόγον, δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο, τά τε ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς· τὸν ἐλθόντα καὶ σάρκα ἀναλαβόντα, καὶ παθόντα, καὶ ἀναςάντα, καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς. καὶ εἰς ἅγιον Πνεῦμα, καὶ σαρκὸς ἀνάςασιν, καὶ εἰς ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, καὶ εἰς βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν, καὶ εἰς μίαν ἐκκλησίαν καθολικὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὴν ἀπὸ περάτων εἰς περάτων. Ταύτην δὲ τὴν πίςιν παρειλήφαμεν ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων εὐαγγελίων, λέγοντος

τοῦ

τῆ Κυρίᾳ τοῖς ἑαυτῆ μαθηταῖς, πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος. Εἰ δὲ μή· ταῦτα οὕτω πιστεύομεν καὶ ἀποδεχόμεθα ἀληθῶς, Πατέρα καὶ Υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα, ὡς πᾶσα ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία καὶ ἅγιαι γραφαὶ διδάσκουσιν, ὡς καλὰ πάντα πιστεύομεν, κριτὴς ἡμῶν ἔσται ὁ Θεὸς καὶ νῦν καὶ ἐν τῇ μελλούσῃ ἡμέρᾳ. Διὸ παρακαλοῦμεν σε τὴν εὐσέβειαν, θεοφιλέστατε ἡμῶν βασιλεῦ, ἐκκλησιαστικοὺς ἡμᾶς ὄντας, καὶ τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὸ φρόνημα τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν ἁγίων γραφῶν ἔχοντας, ἐνοῦσθαι ἡμᾶς διὰ τῆς εἰρηνοποιοῦ σου καὶ θεοσεβοῦς εὐσεβείας τῇ μητρὶ ἡμῶν, τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ δηλαδὴ, περιῃρημένων τῶν ζητημάτων, καὶ τῶν ἐκ τῶν ζητημάτων περιουσιολογιῶν· ἵνα καὶ ἡμεῖς καὶ ἡ ἐκκλησία μετ' ἀλλήλων εἰρηνεύοντες, τὰς συνήθεις εὐχὰς ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰρηνικῆς σου, κοινῇ πάντες ποιώμεθα [d].

But

To Religioſiſſimo Deique amantiſſimo Domino noſtro Imperatori Conſtantino, Arius et Euzoïus Preſbyteri.

Sicut præcepit Deo cariſſima pietas tua, domine imperator, fidem noſtram exponimus, ſcriptoque profitemur coram Deo, nos et illos, qui nobiſcum ſunt, ita credere uti ſubjectum eſt.—Credimus in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem; et in Dominum noſtrum Jeſum Chriſtum, Filium ejus, qui ex eo genitus eſt ante omnia ſæcula; Deum verbum, per quem omnia facta ſunt, quæ in cœlo et quæ in terra: qui deſcendit et incarnatus eſt: qui paſſus eſt, et reſurrexit et aſcendit ad cælos: et iterum venturus eſt ut judicet vivos et mortuos. Et in Spiritum ſanctum: in carnis reſurrectionem: et in vitam venturi ſæculi regnumque cælorum: et in unam catholicam eccleſiam Dei, *quæ a primis cardinibus*

But, if Heretics had hard meaſure from the orthodox at firſt, it was not long before they were able to repay them in kind.—However, it is but doing juſtice to Conſtantine on this occaſion, to declare that he endeavoured in earneſt, uſing the moſt rational and perſuaſive arguments, to prevail with Alexander and Arius to decline their unhappy conteſt, and mutually forgive each other: as an evidence of this, it may be worth while to ſelect a paſſage or two from that excellent epiſtle, which he addreſſed to them both. After blaming the Biſhop for his indiſcretion, and the Preſbyter for his preſumption, in quarrelling with ſo much acrimony about a matter, which neither they nor any-body

bus ad ultimos uſque terrarum fines porrigitur. Hanc autem fidem ex ſanctis Evangeliis accepimus, Domino diſcipulis ſuis dicente, Ite et docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus ſancti. Niſi autem ita credimus, et niſi vere ſuſcipimus Patrem et Filium et Spiritum ſanctum, ſicut omnis catholica eccleſia et ſcripturæ docent, quibus per omnia credimus, judex noſter ſit Deus nunc et in futuro judicio. Idcirco pietatem tuam rogamus, Deo cariſſime imperator, ut, cum Eccleſiaſtici ſimus, et fidem ac ſenſum eccleſiæ ſanctarumque ſcripturarum teneamus, per pacificam ac religioſam pietatem tuam uniamur matri noſtræ Eccleſiæ, ſublatis videlicet quæſtionibus ac diſputationibus ſuperfluis, ut et nos et eccleſia, mutuam inter nos pacem ſervantes, ſolemnes preces pro pacato et religioſo imperio tuo, et pro univerſa ſtirpe tua, ſimul omnes ad Deum fundamus, Sozomeni Hiſt. lib. ii.

elſe underſtood, and yet might be the cauſe of horrid blaſphemy, and a dangerous ſchiſm among the people, he obſerves, Οὐδὲ γὰρ ὑπὲρ τῆς κορυφαίας τῶν ἐν τῷ νόμῳ παραγγελμάτων ὑμῖν ἐξήφθη πρόφασις, οὐδὲ καινή τις ὑμῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ θρησκείας αἵρεσις ἀντεισήχθη· ἀλλ' ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἔχετε λογισμὸν, ὥσπερ τὸ τῆς κοινωνίας σύνθημα. ὑμῶν γὰρ ἐν ἀλλήλοις ὑπὲρ μικρῶν καὶ λίαν ἐλαχίστων φιλονεικούντων, τοσοῦτον τὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ λαὸν ταῖς ὑμετέραις ἐθύνεσθαι φρεσὶν προσήκει, διὰ τὸ διήκονεῖν· ἀλλ' ὅτε πρέπον, ὅτε ὅλως θεμιτὸν εἶναι πιστεύεται [e]. He then reminds them, that philoſophers of the ſame ſect could differ in many of their opinions without prejudice to the ſect itſelf; and it was ſhamefully degrading the clerical character, to let an idle diſpute, a controverſy about vain words, be referred to the deciſion of a general council: for, ſays he, Δημώδη ταῦτ' ἐστὶ, καὶ παιδικαῖς ἀνοίαις ἁρμόττοντα μᾶλλον, ἢ τῇ τῶν ἱερέων καὶ φρονίμων ἀνδρῶν συνέσει προσήκοντα [f].

Never

[e] Neque enim de præcipuo et ſummo legis noſtræ mandato inter vos eſt orta contentio: neque ullum novum a vobis de Dei cultu introductum eſt dogma. Sed unam eandemque ſententiam ambo tenetis; adeo ut ad communionis ſocietatem coire facile poſſitis. Vobis enim pertinaciter contendentibus de rebus parvis atque leviſſimis, tam numeroſum Dei populum veſtro arbitrio regi et impelli non decet, in tanta præſertim animorum diſſenſione: nec ſolum id indecorum, ſed prorſus nefas eſſe exiſtimatur.

Socratis Hiſt. lib. i.

[f] Plebeia ſunt hæc, et quæ puerili magis inſcitiæ quam

ſacerdotum

Never had man a better inclination, never had emperor greater power, never did a biſhop take more pains, to conciliate differences and eſtabliſh the peace of the church, than Conſtantine the Great. But the higheſt human authority laboured then, and has ever ſince laboured, in vain to accompliſh the purpoſe. And it muſt be ſo as long as ſimilar cauſes will produce ſimilar effects.

If then the canons of an œcumenical council, and enforced too by the reſcripts of a prince who was abſolute ſovereign of the vaſt Roman empire, were inſufficient to controul the licentiouſneſs of ſome churchmen, and pacify the people; if the experience of many ages alſo teſtifies that canons have been made to confirm canons, in council after council, with as little utility; is not almoſt as much benefit to be expected from an application to Nobody, as from an appeal to an eccleſiaſtical ſynod?

It may be ſaid, perhaps, that in this country the ſovereign is conſtitutionally head of the church; and in particular that one may depend on it, the piety of the preſent ſovereign will induce him to give his royal aſſent to any well-

ſacerdotum et prudentium virorum ſapientiæ congruant. Socratis Hiſt. lib. i.

The opinion of the celebrated Biſhop of Hippo has been often referred to on a ſimilar occaſion—Melius eſt dubitare de occultis, quam litigare de incertis.

adviſed

adviſed meaſures for the more reputable ſupport of the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment. Agreed: there can be no doubt of it. What then?— Sovereign princes commonly ſee and examine things in a different manner from other men.— It is no more than a civil compliment in all countries, where an alliance has been really concluded between the church and ſtate, that the ſovereign ſhould be veſted with proper authority, and declared the head: that paramount ſupremacy, claimed by the biſhop of Rome, being hardly now worth mentioning as an uſurpation, which is ſomewhat on the decline every where, and, it is to be hoped, diſcarded for ever in England. The firſt formal concluſion of this alliance was made as a thing of courſe, and without any ſecret articles, ſoon after the converſion of Conſtantine, the firſt Chriſtian Emperor: and the high contracting parties, as the petty princes of Germany will ſometimes call themſelves, were exceedingly deſirous to manifeſt in the moſt unexceptionable manner the ſincerity of their good faith and regards. In the exhibition of this evidence, the religious part of Conſtantine's character muſt give way to his political. He exerted all his influence, and mighty and extenſive it certainly was, to promote on all occaſions, in every part of his

own

own dominions, in Scythia, Perſia, and wherever he could, the propagation of the Goſpel and the intereſt of the church; and more eſpecially, like moſt other ſovereigns, the intereſt of Biſhops and other dignitaries of diſtinction, who could make their court to him. It may be pretended that in the nature of things he had no other way: but, hang it! Superſtition of itſelf, ſilly as it is, would hardly have been ſilly enough to have ſaid, Ὡς ἡ αὐτόπλης ἐπισκόπε γάμον ἀλλότριον διορύτλοντος γίνοιτο, συγκαλύψαι ἂν τῇ πορφυρίδι τὸ παρανόμως γινόμενον, ὡς ἂν μὴ βλάψῃ τὲς θεωμένες τῶν δρωμένων ἡ ὄψις [g]. It is but fair, however, to give the reaſon aſſigned by him for not expoſing even the moſt criminal action of a perſon in holy orders: Οὐ γὰρ ἔφη χρῆναι τῶν ἱερέων τὰ πλημμελήματα δῆλα γίνεσθαι τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἵνα μὴ σκανδάλε πρόφασιν ἐντεῦθεν λαβόντες, ἀδεῶς ἁμαρτάνωσι [h]. This was the Emperor's pious example [i]: and the Eccleſiaſtics were not ungratefully

[g] Se, ſi Epiſcopum adulterium perpetrantem oculis ſuis videret, illegitimum facinus paludamento ſuo obtecturum eſſe, ne hujus facinoris ſpectaculum ipſis ſpectatoribus noxium eſſet. Theodoret. Hiſt. lib. i.

[h] Nefas enim eſſe aiebat, ut Sacerdotum delicta ad vulgi notitiam pervenirent, ne populus offendiculi occaſionem inde arripiens, licentius ad flagitia prorumperet. Ibidem.

[i] And even now it is not improbable that Frederic the great of Pruſſia, whoſe faith and works are not at all apocryphal,

gratefully inattentive; but would have excelled it, had it been poſſible. When he thought it neceſſary to aſſemble a council at Orleans, profeſſedly with a deſign to ſettle all the differences which had ariſen in Africa, and were then ſubſiſting, between Cæcilian, Biſhop of Carthage, and a ſet of inſolent Sectaries, called Donatiſts, it was ſolemnly ordained, as appears by the third canon, "Ut, qui arma in prælio "projiciunt, excommunicentur." One would take this for an order adviſed in a council of war, rather than for a decree made in a convocation of right reverend divines. Sure enough it breathes the ſpirit of a General more than of a Biſhop, and could only be calculated for the ſervice of the church militant.—But let it be taken for what it will, there never was a canon made with deeper policy. It may ſeem to make the diſcipline of the church ſubſervient to the temporary tricks and purpoſes of ſtate: and ſo it certainly did. Yet for all this it had its origin in religion; for it was founded on the perſuaſion, that the fear of the devil would overcome the fear of death. A notion, which ſuperſtition in proceſs of time nurſed up into a monſter, too formidable for kings themſelves to engage with.

If it be true then, upon the whole, that Primates, and Princes, and Synods, have, in every age of the Goſpel, either neglected or endeavoured in vain to redreſs a multitude of grievances eccleſiaſtical; an appeal to Nobody, if not the proper appeal, is undeniably as good and promiſing an appeal as any other. And beſides, it need not be drawn up and preſented in ſo ſervile a manner as an humble petition; which crouches to the ground, like a lame beggar, and is generally as little regarded: and it would be ridiculous to have it made with the ſpirit of a remonſtrance; becauſe Nobody can have been guilty of negligence or miſbehaviour in any reſpect. But of all the reaſons, the circumſtances of the preſent times afford the moſt convincing and reſtrictive. For petitions have been ſo repeatedly preſented in the courſe of a few years, that the reigning policy is come to this concluſion, *Qui probat nimis, probat nihil*; and therefore every petitioner is proſcribed as a ſchiſmatic or a traitor. And yet the pride of deſpotiſm is eaſily impoſed on: for if the requeſt be made by a proper interceſſor, and without any legal form, which looks like a demand of juſtice, the moſt atrocious crimes may have their malignity abated; and murder and ſodomy and even rebellion itſelf may

may find grace enough to be forgiven. Well then, if ever Sulpicius preſents a petition to any throne or principality or power, it ſhall be at a critical juncture, in the midſt of a moſt dreadful ſtorm, when, a philoſophical poet ſays, the rapid flaſhes of lightning, and the pealing of thunder, and the concuſſions of the earth, will make a tyrant himſelf tremble, and diſcover apprehenſions that there is a Being above him. The paſſage is worth quoting, and exquiſitely deſcriptive:

" —— Cui non animus formidine Divûm
" Contrahitur? Cui non conrepunt membra pavore,
" Fulminis horribili cùm plagâ torrida tellus
" Contremit, et magnum percurrunt murmura cælum?
" Non populi genteſque tremunt? Regeſque ſuperbi
" Conripiunt Divûm perculſi membra timore,
" Ne quod ob admiſſum fœdè dictumve ſuperbè
" Pœnarum grave ſit ſolvendi tempus adactum[k]?"

And now for ſome remarks on the duty and conduct of a modern biſhop; which the reader of this addreſs will allow, if he has been able to perceive any force of reaſoning in the preceding arguments and obſervations, it is Nobody's buſineſs to take notice of; becauſe it is in Nobody's power to regulate or reform either. If Nobody then is the only perſonage of ſuf-

[k] Lucretius, lib. v.

ficient authority for the preſent purpoſe: May it pleaſe his ſerene highneſs to take into ſerious conſideration the following relation of facts! And if but a few ſalutary effects ſhould be the reſult of it, a proper acknowlegement will be very gratefully made to the moſt high, moſt mighty, and moſt puiſſant Prince NOBODY, Earl Every-where, Duke of All-things, and Grand Signior.

IN order to judge with accuracy and preciſion, whether the grievous charge of negligence and miſconduct, which has been often brought, and was never yet fairly refuted, when brought by a real friend to the divine and rational principles of the Goſpel, againſt the Eccleſiaſtics of epiſcopal dignity, it will be neceſſary to draw a general line of duty, which the ſuppoſed delinquents cannot poſſibly make the leaſt objection to.—Let the line then begin with an office in the church of England peculiar to a Biſhop, that of Confirmation: let it be extended to another point, and reach another duty almoſt as peculiarly epiſcopal, Ordination; and from this, it is an eaſy tranſition to beneficiary affairs, which are unqueſtionably of ſuperlative importance, and will always teſtify

teſtify whether the Prelate is an attentive conſcientious overſeer, or a ſlothful temporizing paraſite, or a perjured and rapacious ſpoiler. It muſt be owned, theſe are ſtriking characteriſtics; and if Biſhops themſelves had not been ſo liberal in beſtowing them on one another, it might have been thought that ſome enemy of all righteouſneſs had been the author of them.

As to the nature, definition, or deſign of Confirmation, it is not very material whether any regard is paid to the various notions of the Ancients, to the controverſies ſtill prevailing among the Moderns about it, or whether the preſcriptions of the Engliſh eccleſiaſtical polity be the only objects of conſideration. It is enough to obſerve, that it is a ſolemn ritual of religion, and of great antiquity. For this is incontrovertibly true; though the modes and circumſtances of adminiſtration may have varied ever ſo much. And even the Doctors of the reformed churches, who will not allow it to have been in uſe when Juſtin Martyr wrote his Apology, becauſe he does not mention it in his candid enumeration of Chriſtian Ceremonies, cannot deny that it was become an uſage, but a few years after, in Tertullian's time: ſo that, if it may not accord entirely with the apoſtolical Χειροθεσία, it muſt in all probability be de-

rived from it, as the learned Biſhop Pearſon ſuppoſes. This opinion is well ſupported by ſeveral Ancients, and particularly by the anonymous author of a Tract De Baptiſmo non iterando, which was firſt publiſhed by Rigaltius among the works of Cyprian; who is quite poſitive, "per manûs impoſitionem epiſcopi "datur unicuique credenti Spiritus Sanctus, "ſicut Apoſtoli circa Samaritanos poſt Philippi "baptiſma manum eis imponendo fecerunt [1]." And Jerom aſſerts the very ſame in his Dialogue againſt the Luciferians—"An neſcis et jam "Eccleſiarum hunc eſſe morem ut baptizatis "poſtea manus imponatur et ita invocetur Spi-"ritus Sanctus? Exigis ubi ſcriptum ſit? In "actibus Apoſtolorum. Etiamſi Scripturæ "auctoritas non ſubeſſet, totius orbis in hac "parte conſenſus inſtar præcepti obtinet. Nam "et multa alia, quæ per traditionem in Eccle-"ſiis obſervantur, auctoritatem ſibi ſcriptæ legis "uſurpaverunt: velut in lavacro ter caput "mergitare; deinde lactis et mellis præguſtare "concordiam ad infantiæ ſignificationem."

This brief account of its antiquity will make it eaſily believed, that the neceſſity of Confirmation was ſtrongly urged by the Ancients; and as one proof of this, the caſe of Novatian

[1] Cave, Hiſt. Literar.

is commonly cited from Euſebius, by thoſe who ſtill contend for it as an uſeful and important inſtitution.

But whether it is to be called a ſacrament, as the Papiſts would have it, or "only a ſacramental ſupplement," as Hooker expreſſes it, or rejected totally as a ſuperſtitious relique, like the chriſm and conſignation of the croſs, which would pleaſe the Preſbyterians perhaps, is what the author of this addreſs has nothing to do with. It is at preſent a lawful ceremony in the church of England, and dignified too by a poſitive reſtraint to the epiſcopal office; and while it remains ſo, it ought moſt certainly to be obſerved with decency by thoſe who are ſo honourably diſtinguiſhed in the adminiſtration of it. If it has not this reſpect ſhewn it, it will be natural for the moſt illiterate among the laity, to conclude that it is certainly inſignificant; or elſe that a grave Biſhop muſt be guilty of ſome neglect, and behave in a manner very inconſiſtent with the moſt ſolemn engagements.—But the permiſſion of pædobaptiſm muſt receive ſo much rational ſupport from the regular obſervance of this rite, when the Catecheumens are well inſtructed on what principles they take upon themſelves the ſponſorial charge, and are brought in decent order to confirm

a covenant, which had been made on their account, in the moſt ſacred form of religion, it cannot be ſuppoſed that Confirmation is a [m] vain and unavailing ceremony. If it ſhould appear ſo then, the blame ought to be laid on the party conducting it; on the Biſhops, Archdeacons, and other officials: and there is not the leaſt doubt that all the conſcientious among them think ſo too.

Yet where is the Biſhop, who conſcientiouſly exerts his influence for the due diſcharge of this duty?—In every dioceſe, ſaith every Biſhop; and appeals for evidence to every Epiſcopalian. —One might indeed depend on it: for "Every "beaſt loveth his like, and every man loveth "his neighbour [n]." And, as Socrates juſtly obſerved, Οὐ καλεπὸν Ἀθηναίῳ ἐν Ἀθηναίοις ἐπαινεῖν [o].

It is not, however, enough; it is not all that is expected by the moſt indifferent among the faithful, that Biſhops are periodically regular as to time and place: there is a manner, as in every thing elſe, which recommends even

[m] "The Ancients ſuppoſed Confirmation ſuperadded to "the benefit of regeneration. The new-birth gave inno-"cence and pardon of ſins; but the invocation of the Spirit "added wiſdom and ſtrength, to preſerve and eſtabliſh men "in innocence to perfection." Bingham.

[n] Eccleſiaſticus, xiii. 15.

[o] Ariſtot. Rhet.

a reli-

a religious ceremony to the veneration and eſteem of moſt people. Nobody doubts whether the right reverend gentlemen are not able to produce ſome very poſitive evidence in ſupport of their general conduct: but there is a well-atteſted anecdote, which clearly proves that they are not all of them, and at all times, quite ſo decent as they ſhould be in their mode of confirming.——When a certain Prelate arrived at a certain place, he made all the haſte he could to diſpatch his buſineſs. He was ſoon dreſſed in his canonicals, ſoon entered the church, ſoon ſaid his oraiſon at the altar; and the miniſter of the pariſh alſo ſoon read the preface to the Confirmation ſervice. The Catecheumens too, having no guide, overſeer, or ruler, to direct them, were equally eager to puſh forward their perſons: it ſeems, the moſt vulgar among them could not have been more ſo, had they been actually afraid that their holy Father in God would not have a benediction left for the laſt of them. Ignorance or inexperience will not excuſe irreligious rudeneſs, being naturally apt to inſpire the contrary; and ſuch behaviour muſt be very provoking. But the Biſhop perhaps did not conſider, that his own ſpirit of impatience might be communicated at a little diſtance, like electrical fire;

fire; and therefore, when the youth made their approaches too precipitately, he called out for a conſtable; and had he been at Weſtminſter, would probably have prayed for a detachment from the third regiment of guards, to protect his epiſcopal majeſty. But fortunately for him, he had no occaſion; he was then attended by a champion of the church, that blunderbuſs of divinity, who made St. Mary's roar with politics for the edification of Alma-Mater's family, and afterwards publiſhed them for the emolument of his own. This hero, obſerving that his delegates ſeemed to labour in vain, went down in perſon to the door of the church, and immediately convinced the croud,

"By apoſtolic blows and knocks,
"That his commands were orthodox."

When this tumult had ſubſided a little, it was very eaſy to ſee, that the Prelate did not think he was then engaged in the happieſt employment: for inſtead of looking like an amiable bleſſing Biſhop, * contempt ſat ſcowling on his countenance, and every now and then declared itſelf in expreſſions of ſcorn and menace.

But a particular incident muſt not be omitted in this rehearſal of an eccleſiaſtico-political

* "— Mens aſpera, vultus in irâ
"Semper." Sil. Ital. lib. xiv.

farce,

farce, which cannot be made ſo ridiculouſly deteſtable in deſcription as it actually appeared in its original repreſentation.——A young lady had been ſo unlucky as not to reckon a head-dreſs *à-la-mode*, and in the higheſt taſte, among the pomps and vanities which ſhe had renounced: but the grave rebuke of a Biſhop ſoon made her lower her top-gallant, and be glad to receive the ſpirit under a double reef, as ſnug as any body.—Had this happened in any *belle aſſemblée*, the man would have been called unanimouſly an ill-bred fellow, and a brute: whereas it is always proper that folly and extravagance of every ſort, which muſt proceed from carnal and inordinate deſires, ſhould have their ſinfulneſs ſeverely cenſured in a church.—The poor young lady, however, was much to be pitied; being unexpectedly reprimanded on her knees, by a great Dignitary, in a congregation of prieſts and other people—

" Servatur tamen in pœna vultuſque pudorque:
" Supplicia ipſa decent. Nivea cervice reclinis
" Molliter ipſa ſuæ cuſtos eſt ſola figuræ."

Her ſin was a *prepoſterous* method of dreſſing her hair: and to be ſure ſhe ſhould not have brought any of it before, which would more naturally have fallen behind. Her ſin might be made more heinous too, by an artful intermix-

ture of other hair with her own: for every kind of deception ſhould be diſcouraged. But how could the peeviſh old Prelate look at the groupe of divines who attended him, if he had forgotten his own full-bottom, and not perceive that ſome of their perriwigs were of a ſtrange unnatural ſhape, and quite as monſtrous as a lady's *tête?* For the moſt remarkable difference ſeems to be in the ſituation of the ſwell. The ladies chuſe theirs in front: and they muſt be in the right of it; becauſe it may ſecure the brain from ſeveral accidents, ſhould the coronal future not be quite cloſe. The gentlemen of ſcience, in law, phyſic, or divinity, and ſome in trade, chuſe theirs behind: and they are alſo in the right of it; for, as their purſuits require deeper penetration, it behoves them to take greater care of the occipital part, called in common Engliſh *the noddle.*

The ladies, it muſt be owned, have every thing in their favour, ſhould they appeal to antiquity: when the moſt civilized nations were diſtinguiſhed for their peculiar ſkill and aſſiduity in dreſſing their hair. Even a ſchool-boy has learnt from Homer, to conſider the moſt poliſhed and luxurious among the Greeks, as the moſt curious and ſingular in their mode

of

of hair-dreſſing—Καρηκομόωντες Ἀχαιοὶ. And not only the [p] natives of Greece in general;

"At Syriam produnt torti per tempora crines."

But as to the gentlemen, their wigs have not half ſo honourable an origin: not even if the emperor Antoninus Caracalla be in fact the firſt Roman of high diſtinction that ever wore one. Πολλάκις δὲ καὶ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν ἀποθέμενος χλαμύδα, ἠμφίεννυτο τὰ Γερμανῶν περιβλήματα, ἔν τε χλαμύσιν ποικιλμέναις, εὐώθασιν, ἀργύρῳ ποικιλμέναις ἐωρᾶτο. κόμας τε τῇ κεφαλῇ ἐπιτίθετο ξανθὰς, καὶ εἰς κυρὰν τῶν Γερμανῶν ἠσκημένας [q]. Nor will it do them much more credit to introduce from Lucian the impoſtor

[p] Ἐν τοῖς πρῶτοι δὴ Ἀθηναῖοι τόν τε σίδηρον καλέθεντο, καὶ ἀνειμένῃ τῇ διαίτῃ ἐς τὸ τρυφερώτερον μελέτησαν, καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι αὐτοῖς τῶν εὐδαιμόνων διὰ τὸ ἁβροδίαιτον ἐς πολὺς χρόνος ἐπειδὰν χιτῶνας τε λινοῦς ἐπαύσαντο φορέντες, καὶ χρυσῶν τεττίγων ἐν ἔρσει χρωβύλον ἀναδέμενοι τῶν ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ τριχῶν. Thucydides, lib. i. Some of the learned in Lexicography pretend, that κρωβύλος ſignifies the ſame as *villus*, *cincinnus*, *intortus crinis puerorum*; and appeal to Heſychius and Suidas for the truth of their explication. But the author of the ancient Scholia on Thucydides is of a different opinion: he ſays, Κρωβύλος δέ ἐστιν εἶδος πλέγματος τῶν τριχῶν ἀπὸ ἑκατέρων εἰς ὀξὺ ἀπολῆγον. ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ τῶν μὲν ἀνδρῶν, κρωβύλος· τῶν δὲ γυναικῶν, κόρυμβος. τῶν δὲ παίδων, σκορπίος.

[q] Herodian. lib. iv.—Sæpe etiam, Romano cultu depoſito, veſtem Germanicam induebat, atque in eorum ſagulis argento variegatis conſpiciebatur: etiam flavam capiti cæſariem imponens, ad modum Germanicæ tonſuræ.

Alexander.

Alexander. Τὸ γὰρ δὴ σῶμα, ἵνα σοι καὶ τοῦτο δείξω, μέγας τε ἦν καὶ καλὸς ἰδεῖν καὶ θεοπρεπὴς ὡς ἀληθῶς. λευκὸς τὴν χρόαν, τὸ γένειον δ' πάνυ λάσιος, κόμην τὴν μὲν ἰδίαν, τὴν καὶ προσθέλον ἐπικείμενος, εὖ μάλα εἰκασμένην, καὶ τὰς πολλὰς ὅτι ἦν ἀλλοτρία λελη θυῖαν [r]. For the rogue, it ſeems, had a better taſte than to load his head with an enormous frizzle of hair like nothing in nature. And as to the appoſititious hair worn by the Medes, it does not appear from Xenophon either how or where they fixed it.

A matter of ſuch undiſputed importance would require a great deal more to be ſaid about it: but as the ſurly and unſeaſonable obloquy of an angry old prieſt reached only to the fair circle, at that time near the rails of an altar;

"Nec minuit denſas invida lingua comas [s];"

it may be thought prudence perhaps to decline any further conſideration of it, and high time to reſume the ſubject.

It has been thought a tolerably good apology by ſome of the epiſcopal party, when the neg-

[r] Lucian Pſeudomantis—Corpore igitur, ut tibi etiam hoc indicem, procerus erat, et aſpectu decorus, plane divinâ ſpecie, colore candido, barbâ non admodum hirſutâ, comâ tectus partim nativâ, partim appoſititiâ, ſcite admodum effictâ, quam aſcititiem eſſe vulgus ignorabat.

[s] Ovid. Amor. lib. i.

ligence

ligence or miſconduct of Biſhops has been complained of, and particularly in the office of Confirmation, to pretend that it is not poſſible to be minutely regular in a very large and very populous dioceſe. And would the defenders of their delinquency have it believed, that the Biſhops did not know whether they were really able to undergo the fatigue of this duty before they actually attempted it? If they did not, how were they qualified? if they did, where ſhall we look for that moſt amiable quality in every religious man, a conſcientious ſincerity? But impoſſibilities are not injoined them. Nobody expects that Biſhops ſhould walk upon the water, and be able to croſs the ocean on foot. A want of faith would have drowned an Apoſtle, had not his bleſſed Saviour himſelf been ready at hand to ſupport him. And it may be queſtioned, whether the piety of the preſent times, was it all collected in a ſingle Prelate, would be worthy of the like ſupernatural preſervation. Yet, after all, the diſpute is not about a matter of mere nicety in the mode or circumſtances of the ceremony: the diſpute is occaſioned chiefly by a moſt careleſs remiſſion, or a moſt indecent hurry, in the obſervance of it. If then a Biſhop looks on it as a thing indifferent, and only grown venerable

ble by its antiquity, let him lodge his plea with the Papiſts, and get them to argue for the retention of it among others of a ſimilar nature. If he looks on it as a religious rite, uſeful at leaſt if not eſſentially neceſſary, and would have it duly and decently performed if it was in his power, let him apply for proper aſſiſtance. It would not perhaps contaminate the virtue of a Biſhop's bleſſing, if it was beſtowed in a different manner, and by ſome auxiliars of a ſubordinate dignity. The Ancients were moſt certainly of this opinion. "Concilium Auriacum pri-" mum," ſays Baſnage, "jus confirmandi aſſignat " Preſbyteris:" for they decreed, "Hæreticos in " mortis diſcrimine poſitos, ſi Catholici eſſe de-" ſiderant, ſi deſit Epiſcopus, a Preſbyteris cum " chriſmate et benedictione conſignari placuit." And a little afterwards, indeed in the next paragraph, he proceeds thus: "Non neſcimus " quidem eam fuiſſe Eccleſiarum bene multa-" rum conſuetudinem, ut quos ſacris fontibus " expiarant Preſbyteri, illis manus imponerent " Epiſcopi. Sed id Præſulum honori datum, " non autem privilegium divinitus conceſſum " fuit. Itaque, abſente Epiſcopo, fas erat Pre-" ſbyteris manus imponere. Teſtis Ambro-" ſiaſter: apud Ægyptum Preſbyteri conſig-" nant, ſi non ſit præſens Epiſcopus. Teſtis

" autor

" autor Quæſtionum Vet. et Novi Teſtamenti " apud Auguſtinum: nam in Alexandria et " per totam Ægyptum, ſi deſit Epiſcopus, con- " ſecrat (lege conſignat) Preſbyter. Quem te- " net et morem Æthiopum Eccleſia[t]."

It has been the wiſh of many excellent perſons, and even of ſome Biſhops, that there might be an appointment of Archpreſbyters, a ſort of Rural Deans, for the more immediate inſpection of all parochial matters, and eſpecially for the ſake of Confirmation. But the wiſh, like a multitude of others, not half ſo wiſe, nor half ſo uſeful, has been thrown at random, and deſtroyed in the ſpawn: and it muſt not be thought wonderful; for things of a religious nature have not always a religious reaſon, either for their neglect or performance. An ancient author has declared, that this was the caſe in ſeveral places with the very ceremony under conſideration. " Multis in locis id tamen fac- " tum eſſe reperimus ad honorem potius ſa- " cerdotii quam ad legis neceſſitudinem. Alio- " quin, ſi Epiſcopi tantum imprecatione Spiritus " Sanctus defluit, lugendi ſunt, qui in villulis " et in caſtellis et in remotioribus locis per " Preſbyteros et Diaconos baptizati, ante dor- " mierunt quam ab Epiſcopis inviſerentur."

[t] Baſnag. Annal. polit. eccleſ. vol. i. p. 474.

And it may well be expected that this ſhould be very much the caſe at preſent, when Moderation, the amiable offspring of Benevolence, is ſo univerſally ſupplanted by Indifference, the natural child of Infidelity. Univerſally indeed! For one may ſee with half-ſhut eyes the piety even of Prelates is very languid, and, like the love of many, waxeth cold.

The Ordination of proper perſons to any clerical office, is of the utmoſt conſequence to the credit and ſupport of religion: it was thought ſo in the firſt ages of the Goſpel; and accordingly we find a great variety of regulations made for the purpoſe. But the different modes of deſignation and election make too perplexing a ſubject to be meddled with in this ſhort addreſs. It may be enough to obſerve, that there is ſomething of the old popular method ſtill retained in the Engliſh church; for the congregation is appealed to and called upon, to allege any legal impediment againſt any of the candidates: but it is a common thing for the form to ſurvive the ſpirit of a conſtitution.

In the three firſt centuries, when perſecution raged ſo often, and preferment was in general ſo inconſiderable, an appointment to the Epiſcopate itſelf being only an elevation to greater danger, there was but little occaſion for canons to

to prevent any ſiniſter arts or ſimoniacal promotions. It was after the Chriſtian became the eſtabliſhed religion of the Roman Empire, that the munificence of the moſt high and opulent had made a ſtation in the church worth the regard of the corrupt or covetous: it was not however long after; for in the fifth century an elegant writer declares, "Nunc Epiſcopatus "pravis ambitionibus appetuntur."

The requiſite qualifications for admiſſion into holy orders, which there can be no neceſſity, and ought to be no inclination, to diſpenſe with in any age or country, are moſt certainly a ſound faith, good morals, and a competent ſhare of learning. But alas! if the living inſtances, let them be ever ſo few, of perſons deſtitute of one or other or all theſe requiſites, and yet admitted into the miniſtry, were added to thoſe on record, it could hardly be called an hyperbole to pronounce them innumerable. Let one then, who has no erudition to diſplay in a recital from antiquity, who has no malice to gratify by a wanton reſearch into perſonalities, who does not wiſh to injure the meaneſt individual under the ſtale pretence of doing God ſervice, be allowed to ſelect a ſingle inſtance of the living ſort, which is very extra-

ordinary, and defies the depravity of the whole Papal empire to produce its equal at preſent.

At one of thoſe meetings of clergymen commonly called, and with abſurdity enough, a Viſitation in the language eccleſiaſtical, a Curate came before his Dioceſan on particular buſineſs; in the courſe of which the poor young fellow appeared to ſuch diſadvantage, the Biſhop could not forbear exclaiming, "Good God!—How could "ſuch a perſon get into orders?—who could or-"dain him?"—The Archdeacon too, on hearing that his name was Solomon, obſerved, with the moſt inſolent affectation of wit, "his ſponſors "were no prophets."—Now it is remarkable, that this very ſame poor creature had been examined by the very ſame Archdeacon, and ordained by the very ſame Biſhop, but a few months before. And the year following, or not long afterwards, the very ſame Biſhop gave the uſual caution at an Ordination: "Take heed that the "perſons, whom ye preſent unto us, be *apt* and "*meet* for their learning and godly converſation, "to exerciſe their miniſtry *duly* to the honour "of God and the edifying of his church." And the very ſame Archdeacon declared too, "I have "enquired of them, and alſo [u] examined them,

[u] If ever there ſhould be a reviſal of the Ordination ſervice, would it not make the Archidiaconal aſſeveration a little more conſiſtent, to have the *alſo* changed into *likewiſe*?

"and

" and think them ſo to be:" and yet the very ſame Solomon was one among them.

The Ordination of an undeſerving perſon may be unavoidable: the deceitfulneſs of teſtimonials, or a future defection from virtue, will eaſily account for it, and may be pleaded as a fair apology. But the Ordination of an under-qualified perſon, and at a time when a ſufficient ſtock of literature is not ſo difficult an acquiſition; when the children of common farmers and mechanics are almoſt univerſally acquainted pretty well with letters, without a liberal education; is a groſs indignity, that cannot be ignorantly, that muſt be traiterouſly or contemptuouſly, offered to the public. Nobody, however, expects, that every candidate ſhould be able to conſtrue the Caſſandra of Lycophron at ſight, with only that ſorry help the verſion of Meurſius: yet Nobody will allow that any man can have too much learning, if he has but a pious diſpoſition to inſtruct the people of the obſcureſt pariſh in the kingdom. It has always been pretended by the ſophiſtical defenders of the preſent corrupt diſcipline, that it is neceſſary to have miniſters of fine accompliſhments in the moſt polite and populous places; and that men of inferior learning and abilities—it muſt be owned, they do not ſay that

men of no learning and abilities—are good enough for a parcel of ruſtics. But Nobody could ever obſerve that they adhered to their own arrangement with the leaſt exactneſs: for it cannot be preſumed, that the ſmart Bob Jeroms, or the large lazy drones, that in ſuch abundance

Shine in the dignity of L or D,

and now and then enjoy thoſe genteel appointments, could poſſibly be promoted on account of their ſuperior excellence as Chriſtian paſtors. Merit is a thing, which men of power and fortune could never engroſs: and a ſhort view of beneficiary affairs will ſoon convince us, that the diſtinction is not ſupported in reality for the ſake of merit.

When the ſecular power was engaged out of policy and out of principle to oppoſe the promulgation of the Goſpel, it cannot be queſtioned, whether the opulent part of the faithful did not contribute [w] ſufficient, to make the office

[w] It might become ſuch diſtinguiſhed Prelates as Chryſoſtom and Auſtin, to declare that the clergy were better and more agreeably ſupported by the voluntary oblations of the people, before the church was endowed with a ſettled revenue: for it is not always expected, that the ſpirit of declamation ſhould attend to truth with the minuteſt regard. When Auſtin in particular found the people diſcovered an invi-

office of a ſpiritual overſeer both honourable and advantageous enough to be called *a benefice:* and if ſo, it cannot be doubted whether there was not ſome extraordinary emolument to be expected in an eccleſiaſtical ſtation, when it became an object of government, to adopt and purſue a plan for the general promotion of Chriſtian knowledge. But it was not only of pecuniary and poſitive ſervice to be ordained a miniſter, it had alſo a negative ſort of advantage, and very deſirable too, that aroſe from a variety of immunities, which the piety of the firſt Chriſtian potentates ſuppoſed neceſſary to be granted, for the more reſpectable appearance and ſupport of the clergy.

invidious diſſatisfaction, becauſe the poſſeſſions of the church were then become ſo exceedingly large, it is ſaid, he propoſed to reſign them on condition. "Alloquebatur plebem "Dei, malle ſe ex collationibus plebis Dei vivere quam "illarum poſſeſſionum curam vel gubernationem pati; et "paratum ſe illis cedere, ut eo modo omnes Dei ſervi et "miniſtri viverent, quo in veteri Teſtamento leguntur Altari "deſervientes de eodem comparticipari. Sed nunquam id "laici ſuſcipere voluerunt." Well; but the people refuſed, it ſeems: and they were in the right. The tithes and firſt-fruits would have brought a more iniquitous and grievous oppreſſion upon them, than what they could ſuffer in general, by an abſolute appropriation of land. This is evident from the preſent equivalents, ſo often allowed to beneficiaries of late, and ſo enormouſly unreaſonable.

This bountiful proviſion for labourers in the vineyard of the Goſpel increaſed their number, but not their induſtry: and the culture was carried on with leſs diligence and ſpirit, than when it was without a hedge, and lay expoſed to the ravages of violent enemies. It was their ambition alſo to be employed about falſe or fanciful ornaments, while things of real utility were ſhamefully neglected; ſo that in a ſhort time corruption got a deep root: and corruption, that moſt pernicious weed in the field of politics or religion, was of rapid growth, and ſoon ſhed a baneful and deleterious influence on all around it.

Some of the earlieſt records are not much in favour of a call from the Holy Spirit; and a century or two after the apoſtolic age will quite take off the poſſibility of a ſuppoſition, that there was always a divine agency in the appointment of miniſters. For after it would anſwer the purpoſe of avarice, idleneſs, or ambition, to get into orders, the eccleſiaſtical legiſlators had full employment for their juriſprudence: and yet, with all their ſkill and experience, they have not been able in the courſe of many hundred years to compile a body of laws, which does not deſerve on one account or other the contempt, rather than the eſteem,

of

of any ſerious ſenſible man. They did not perhaps at any time really want ability: but they wanted what many a great church-man wants at preſent, an honeſt heart and uncomplying integrity. And hence it was, that the very ſame impediment prevailed ſo univerſally, and ſtill prevails to this very day. They would make the utility of the ſtricteſt regulation occaſionally become ſubſervient to the neceſſities or conveniency of certain individuals: they would make laws, and then diſpenſe with the breach of them: they would permit merit, or what will paſs for merit with the help of a microſcope, to enjoy ſome diſtinguiſhed privileges: they would always have one at the head of the hierarchy with power almighty in beneficiary matters, to grant indulgences and a remiſſion of ſins. And what are laws good for, when either perſonal or family intereſt will enable a man to elude them, or even to break them with oſtentation, and only without inſult?

It was made a decree at the council œcumenical of Chalcedon, that every clergyman ſhould have a local deſignation, and be obliged to exerciſe his function in his proper place. Μηδένα ἀπολελυμένως χειροτονεῖσθαι. It ſeems then there were volunteers even in the fifth century of the *Nullatenenſian* ſort; a rambling ſett, who did not

not chuſe to be under any general reſtraint, or confined to time and place. As a mark of ignominy, they were called βακάντιοι, *vacantivi*: but, like unprincipled wretches in every age, they cared not for names, ſo long as it was poſſible for them to purſue their own pleaſures their own way. Now ſuch as theſe were for no place; and yet it is very remarkable, that there muſt be ſome at the ſame time who wanted to engage for two or more places at once: for it was ordained at the ſame council, as Sleidan obſerves, in his continuation of Severus, "Ne quis Clericus, uti vocant, in duarum "civitatum Eccleſiis recipiatur." Notwithſtanding, as he ſays, "Non erat nota tunc tem-"poris illa, quæ dicitur, pluralitas beneficio-"rum; quæ nunc ſic inolevit, ut nihil ſit ea "frequentius. Et noſtra quidem fere memoria, "conſuetudo illa inter alias Eccleſiæ maculas "obrepit, uni ut duos attribueret Pontifex "epiſcopatus. Quod ſi jam eum, qui ſupe-"riori proxima ætate fuit, hac in parte morem "reſtitueret, officium ſuum faceret: ſed quo-"niam id ferre non poteſt, an putamus un-"quam eſſe permiſſurum, ut juxta ſacras li-"teras, et Apoſtolorum atque primi temporis "decreta, res emendentur? Nimirum fruſtra "laborant, qui facta Paparum ad antiquæ re-

"ligionis

" ligionis rationem exquirunt." But idleneſs, or avarice, or ambition, will account for this contrariety of conduct in eccleſiaſtical delinquents, from that time to the preſent; allowing only for a little difference, which the refinement of modern artifice has introduced. It appears from the ancient canons, that the indolent or licentious would not accept any parochial cure or dioceſe, leſt they ſhould not be at liberty enough, and enjoy their darling diſpoſition: it is now evident from daily practice, that the moſt certain way to live in a ſtate of indolence or licentiouſneſs, is to accept a plurality of the beſt benefices, and look out for ſome Nullatenenſians of no fortune to be the ſlaves. Nobody, that knows when the ſun ſhines, will demand a proof of this by an avowal of particular inſtances: Nobody will now challenge an accuſer to prove that the delinquency of eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors in the Proteſtant church of England, has equalled in ſeveral caſes, and far exceeded in others, the delinquency of their predeceſſors, when under the juriſdiction of the church of Rome. For the point was fairly given up towards the cloſe of the laſt century by one of the moſt able and ſtrenuous advocates for the church of England; who knew more about the legal ſtate of benefices

benefices than half the Dignitaries that enjoyed them: not that it need be ſuppoſed they would have had any ſcruple to ſin preſumptuouſly, had they been ever ſo well acquainted with the nature and extent of their duty.

It muſt, however, be confeſſed, to the immortal honour of numbers among the Romiſh clergy, that they have exerted themſelves as much as poſſible, both before and after the Reformation, to ſuppreſs pluralities and a thouſand conſequential abuſes: though they knew that the preeminence and revenue of the holy See would be conſiderably affected by the ſuppreſſion. To mention one or two—"Denys le "Chartreux a fait un petit traitté contra la plu- "ralité de benefices: ou il dit que Saint Thomas, "Guillaume de Paris, Raymond de Pagnafort, "et pluſieurs autres theologiens ayant crû la "pluralité des benefices tres-perileuſe et dam- "nable, c'eſt auſſi ſon deſſein de faire voire que "cette pluralité eſt vitieuſe et damnable, ſi ce "n'eſt dans quelques conjonctures, ou la diſpenſe "eſt legitime. Il dit plus bas que *Pierre* ſur- "nommé *Comeſtor* et *Pierre* le *Chantre* ſont du "meſme avis, et que le Docteur *Ginard* Eveſque "de *Cambray* diſoit, qu'il n'eût pas voulu pour "tout l'or de l'*Arabie* coucher une ſeule nuit "avec deux benefices, quand meſme il auroit

"eſte

" eſte aſſuré d'en reſigner un dés le matin à une " perſonne capable [x]."—And one of the greateſt champions for the Catholic faith, one of the higheſt rank and reputation in the church of Rome, did his utmoſt to accompliſh ſo laudable a deſign. " Le Cardinal Bellarmin blâme auſſi " la pluralité des benefices, dans la lettre qu'il " écrivit à ſon neveu; et repond à ceux qui ſe " couvrent d'une diſpenſe du Pape, que ces " diſpenſes ſont valides dans le tribunal ex- " terieur, mais elles ne ſont ſeures en conſcience " que lorſque la cauſe en eſt juſte et neceſſaire " pour le bien public de l'Egliſe—Sciendum " pontificiam diſpenſationem, quando non ſubeſt " juſta cauſa diſpenſandi, valere in foro fori, ſed " non in foro poli, &c. Sine urgentiſſima cauſa " eademque Eccleſiæ neceſſaria, non poteſt " citra atrocem culpam ſuper hoc diſpenſari.— " Il rapporte les paroles de Dominique Soto " et de quelques autres Theologiens, et il eſt " de meſme ſentiment qu'eux quand ils diſent, " que ſi la diſpenſe du Pape n'a un juſt fon- " dement, elle ne peut donner qu'une fauſſe " et dangereuſe confiance; parce que le Pape " n'eſt pas le maître, mais le diſpenſateur des " Canons, et il ne peut empeſcher qu'une diſ- " penſe injuſte ne ſoit également préjudiciable

[x] La Diſcipline de l'Egliſe, vol. iii. p. 268.

" à celuy

" à celuy qui la demande, ou qui en uſe, et à
" celuy qui l'accorde. Sed ait forte ille cum
" quo diſpenſatum eſt, Papa diſpenſavit, ipſe
" ſibi viderit, ego immunis ſum. Hic tamen
" cavillus ſecuros multos reddit, tutum vero
" neminem. Quoniam Papa non eſt dominus,
" ut identidem dictum eſt, ſed diſpenſator; ideo-
" que qui iniquam diſpenſationem petit, ini-
" quitatis cauſa eſt: et qui ea utitur, eadem
" ſemper irretitur iniquitate.—Après le Car-
" dinal Bellarmin, nous pouvons rapporter icy
" le paroles que Saint Thomas attribue à Saint
" Bernard ſur cette matiere. Le ſens en eſt,
" que la pluralité des Benefices attirera une
" multitude de chaſtimens et de ſupplices après
" la mort. Qui non unus, ſed plures eſt in
" beneficiis; non unus, ſed plures erit in ſup-
" pliciis.—Ce meſme Cardinal propoſa au Pape
" Clement VIII. la pluralité des Benefices,
" comme un abus à reformer, puiſque Saint
" Thomas tient après Saint Bernard, que cette
" pluralité eſt criminelle, et que les diſpenſes
" meſme ne la rendent pas ſure en conſcience,
" ſi elles ne ſont fondées ſur la neceſſité, ou ſur
" l'utilité de l'Egliſe; ob magnam Eccleſiæ
" neceſſitatem, vel certe cauſa majoris utilitatis.
" Enfin Bellarmin declare au Pape que cette
" doctrine de Saint Thomas eſt ſoûtenuë du

" con-

" conſentement unanime de tous les Theolo-
" giens : et hanc doctrinam Sancti Thomæ om-
" nes Theologi probant. Mais il l'avertit en
" particulier que l'uſage receu de permettre aux
" Eveſques Cardinaux de tenir encore un au-
" tre Eveſche, n'eſt peut-eſtre pas ſeure en con-
" ſcience: parce que cet uſage n'eſt pas fondé
" ſur la neceſſité ou l'utilité de l'Egliſe, mais
" ſur le diſſein de relever la dignité des Car-
" dinaux, ou d'augmenter leurs revenus. Quare
" timendum eſt, ne forte non ſint in conſcien-
" tia tuti, qui aliquando duas Eccleſias habent,
" unam Cardinalitiam, aliam non Cardinalitiam.
" Cauſa enim cur Epiſcopis Cardinalibus duæ
" permittantur Eccleſiæ, non videtur eſſe neceſ-
" ſitas vel utilitas Eccleſiæ, ſed major per-
" ſonæ dignitas vel commoditas.— Le Pape
" réſpondit à cet article avec ſa ſageſſe ordi-
" naire, que cette pluralité d'Eveſchez ne ſe
" trouvoit que dans les Eveſques Cardinaux.
" Que ſes predeceſſeurs avoient fait examiner
" cette difficulté, meſme aprés le Concile de
" Trente, et avoient enſuite laiſſé la choſe dans
" l'état où elle eſtoit. Que pour luy il n'avoit
" pas jugé pouvoir condamner le jugement et
" la reſolution de tant de Papes et de tant de
" Cardinaux, ny troubler l'ordre ancien du ſacré
" College, ny enfin expoſer l'Egliſe au tumulte

" et

" te au ſcandale, que ce changement auroit " infailliblement cauſé. Quoad iſtam Poly- " gamiam, ea interdum eſt ſolum in iſtis ſex " Epiſcopatibus Cardinalitiis, circa quos nihil " mutandum duximus: cum a prædeceſſoribus " noſtris etiam poſt Concilium Tridenti num " res hæc examinata fuerit et ita conſtituta. " Et turbare ordinem Collegii, et redarguere " facta prædeceſſorum noſtrorum et tot Car- " dinalium, non viſa fuit nobis res, quæ ſine " ſcandalo fieri poſſet [a]."—It may not be amiſs juſt to give the ſentiments of another very eminent Perſonage. " Le Cardinal Archeveſ- " que de Palerme, qu'on appelle communement " l'Abbe et la Panormitain, ne fut pas diſ- " convenu de tous ces vigoureux ſentimens du " Cardinal de Pavie. Car il a luymeſme de- " claré plus d'une fois, que quelque diſpenſe " qu'on eut du Pape, on ne pouvoir poſſeder " pluſieurs Benefices, ſi cette diſpenſe n'eſtoit " fondée ſur une cauſe raiſonnable. Valet hoc " ad ſciendum, an et quando poſſit quis tenere " plura Beneficia bonâ conſcientiâ. Nam ubi " non ſubeſt cauſa rationabilis, non excuſatur " quis, quoad Deum, etiam ex diſpenſatione " Papæ. Et en un autre endroit, Diſpenſatus " etiam per Papam circa pluralitatem iſtorum

[a] Ibidem, p. 251.

" bene-

" beneficiorum ſine cauſa, licet ſit tutus quoad " Eccleſiam militantem, non tamen quoad " triumphantem, et ſic non valet diſpenſatio " quoad Deum, &c. Et habeo hanc opinio- " nem pro indubitata, quando fieret diſpen- " ſatio, ut Clericus propter utilitatem privatam " obtineret plura beneficia, quorum alterum ſibi " ſufficeret ad honeſtatem vivendi. Nam hoc " caſu non ſolum alteratur humani juris diſ- " poſitio, ſed etiam Chriſti patrimonium in- " juſte diſpergitur. Cum ergo ipſe Papa non " poſſit ſine cauſa alienare bona Eccleſiæ ſine " gravi peccato; multo fortiùs non poteſt " alteri dare poteſtatem ipſum patrimonium " male diſpergendi [b]."

And it ſhall be confeſſed as freely, that there have been among the Papiſts many, beſides thoſe who were benefited by the toleration of abuſes, that were always ready to catch and contort every thing into the ſhape of an argument for the ſervice of a church, which muſt for the ſake of decency ſuppoſe herſelf very ſound, and far enough from any danger of corruption. When Socrates, the Hiſtorian, had a mind to deſcribe the ſtate of a particular country, where one Iſchyras aſſumed the title of Preſbyter without a canonical Ordination,

[b] Ibidem, p. 267.

his learned Editor Valeſius muſt ſtep out of the commentator's track, to draw a precedent from the deſcription, and make an apology for pluralities. Socrates only ſaid, Μαρεώτης χώρα τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας ἐστί. κῶμαι δέ εἰσιν ἐν αὐτῇ πολλαὶ σφόδρα καὶ πολυάνθρωποι, καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐκκλησίαι πολλαὶ καὶ λαμπραί· τάττονται δὲ αὗται αἱ ἐκκλησίαι ὑπὸ τῷ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας ἐπισκόπῳ, καὶ εἰσὶν ὑπὸ τὴν αὐτὸς πόλιν ὡς Παροικίαι [c]. But Valeſius thought he could make it an applicable caſe with the aſſiſtance of Athanaſius; and therefore he ſays, "Hunc Socratis locum valde illuſtrat Atha-"naſius in Apologetico 2. adverſus Arianos. "Cujus verba, quia ab interprete male accepta "ſunt, hic apponam." Ὁ Μαρεώτης χώρα τῆς Ἀλεξανρείας ἐστί. καὶ οὐδέποτε ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ γέγονεν ἐπίσκοπος, οὐδὲ χωρεπίσκοπος. ἀλλὰ τῷ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας ἐπισκόπῳ αἱ ἐκκλησίαι πάσης τῆς χώρας ὑπόκεινται· ἕκαστος τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἔχει τὰς ἰδίας κώμας, μεγίσας καὶ ἀριθμῷ δέκα πε καὶ πλείονας. "Id eſt, Mareotis regio eſt "Alexandriæ: nec ullus unquam in ea fuit "Epiſcopus, ac ne Chorepiſcopus quidem; "ſed univerſæ ejus regionis Eccleſiæ ſubjectæ

[c] Socratis Hiſt. lib. i.—Mareotes regio eſt Alexandriæ. In hac plurimi ſunt vici, et maxima hominum multitudine abundantes: in quibus multæ eæque ſatis illuſtres habentur Eccleſiæ. Iſtæ porro Eccleſiæ omnes ſubjectæ ſunt Alexandrino Epiſcopo, et urbanis ejus Eccleſiis accenſentur, tanquam parochiæ.

"ſunt

" ſunt Epiſcopo Alexandrino: Singuli autem " Preſbyteri *proprios* habent *pagos*, eoſque max- " imos, denos interdum aut plures. Ex his " apparet ſingulos Mareoticæ pagos non ha- " buiſſe ſuum Preſbyterum, ſed unicum Pre- " ſbyterum denos pagos rexiſſe atque interdum " plures. Certe pagus in quo fuit Iſchyras, " cum eſſet omnium minimus, nec Eccleſiam " nec Preſbyterum peculiarem unquam ha- " buerat. In epiſtola quam omnes Mareotidis " Preſbyteri ac Diaconi ſcripſerunt ad Syno- " dum Tyri, quæ refertur ab Athanaſio in " eodem libro, quatuordecim ſubſcripſerunt " Preſbyteri et quindecim Diaconi." Yet the very learned and more candid Benedictines will not allow it to be an argument at all in defence of Pluraliſm. " Citatum Athanaſii locum ita " intellectum vult Valeſius, ut ſinguli Mareo- " tici Preſbyteri decem aut plures maximos " pagos adminiſtrandos haberent. Sed vix " ſuaderi queat, tot tantoſque vicos unicuique " preſbytero commiſſos fuiſſe. Et alioqui huic " interpretationi repugnare videtur ipſe Atha- " naſius, dum ait, Iſchyræ pagum ita parvum " fuiſſe, ut nulla in eo fuerit Eccleſia: quo " innuit, in amplioribus quibuſque Eccleſiam, " atque adeo Preſbyterum extitiſſe. Quare " decem tantum vicos aut plures in tota re-

" gione recenſere Athanaſium exiſtimamus. Et
" ſane vox χώρα, quam uſurpat Athanaſius de
" Mareote loquens, non amplam regionem ſig-
" nificare videtur, ſed haud magnum terræ
" ſpatium. Haud exigua tamen regio fuiſſet
" Mareotes, ſi Preſbyteri Mareotici, qui no-
" vemdecim numerantur in ſubſcriptionibus
" epiſtolæ Alexandri, decem maximos pagos,
" imo plures ſinguli adminiſtrandos habuiſſent.
" Ptolemæus octo urbes aut pagos recenſet."

But in the church of England Nobody, it is believed, can name any Divines of the higheſt diſtinction, that ever endeavoured in earneſt to procure a repeal of the preſent laws in favour of Pluralities and Diſpenſations: they might humbly, very humbly perhaps, repreſent the turpitude of ſome exceſſes as great enough to be reſtrained, could it be done with peace and ſafety to the church; they might recommend to the clergy a conſcientious rectitude of conduct; they might diſcover a ſincere ſolicitude about the regular performance of parochial duties: but let them be ever ſo pious and amiable, ever ſo excellent, ever ſo learned and judicious in other reſpects, they never attempted with any reſolution to eradicate that old ever-growing evil, which is the principal cauſe of all the atrocious guilt, and all the flagrant

flagrant abuſes, that are committed, without any appearance of remorſe, and have been long complained of, in beneficiary affairs. One Dignitary alone, the learned Prideaux, Dean of Norwich, had goodneſs of heart and greatneſs of ſoul, to conſider the laws in force relating to Benefices as ſome of the corrupteſt reliques of popery, and made a generous effort to get them repealed: and he ſucceeded beyond his wiſhes; not in repealing the laws, in the acquiſition of the higheſt honour a conſcientious Chriſtian can ever obtain, the honour of being unfaſhionably ſingular in doing his duty to God and his country. When Monks and inferior Prieſts complained againſt the iniquitous diſtribution of Benefices, they were anſwered by their faithful cotemporaries, "[d] Had you but "our

[d] Father Thomaſſin of the Oratory quotes an author that aſſerts it. "Longin* aſſeure en 1054. que ce fut la Si-"monie qui donna cours à la pluralité des Benefices; en "ſorte que les Docteurs qui condamnoient cette polygamie, "changeoient de ſentiment, quand ils recontroient l'oc-"caſion d'avoir eux-meſmes pluſieurs Benefices." But this reflection will not reach the Dignitaries of England; who prudently decline all offenſive Diſquiſitions about Benefices, while they are but riſing in the trade, and ſay as little againſt

* Hiſt. Polon. l. iii. Facile inventi ſunt pauperes Clerici et Doctores, qui pluralitatem Beneficiorum et pompam eccleſiaſticam reprehenderent, donec offerret ſe occaſio participandi: quâ acceptâ graviter avaritia excæcat eos.

" our chance, you would hold your tongues and " enjoy it:" and when complaints of a ſimilar nature were ſtrongly urged by ſome diſſenters, or by ſome of the learned among the laity within the pale of the church, the defenders of a divine right always ſeemed to conſider them as diabolical efforts to deſtroy the eſtabliſhment: but when a Dignitary of ſolid ſenſe and learning, of irreproachable character and regular conduct, undertook the arduous taſk of attempting to reform abuſes, they were obliged to get the ableſt advocate among them to ſay all that could be ſaid in defence of the diſcipline. And he proved the ſucceſsful diſputant. For the diſcipline ſtill continues, and contributes greatly to the happineſs of many an eminent prieſt.

It is not my deſign to launch at large, and aim at enumeration: a few inſtances ſhall ſuffice, and rather taken than ſelected.

againſt them before as after their elevation. Shall I humbly preſume to furniſh every purſuing prieſt in future with an expreſſive motto? It is in Greek, and taken from the Parænefis of Iſocrates. Στίργε μὲν τὰ παρόντα, ζήτει δὲ τὰ βελτίω. This has an honeſt look, will do for here and hereafter, and is ſurely more in character than a tacit confeſſion that he took orders, as moved indeed by the Holy Ghoſt, but, *à priori, ex cauſâ lucrativâ.*

The

The caſe of officiating and unbeneficed Curates is the firſt that I ſhall take into conſideration. There are ſome places where theſe Stipendiaries receive a comfortable, if not an ample and ſufficient, gratuity for their labours: but nine in ten have no ſuch chance. Their ſalaries in general are inadequate to the expence of decent neceſſaries; and ſome of them can hardly acquire a competency, by becoming practiſing Pluraliſts, and undertaking the care of two, three, four, five, and ſometimes ſix pariſhes; ſeveral of which are very remote from their place of reſidence. The fatigue to themſelves and the inconveniency to the greateſt part of the pariſhioners, eſpecially in the winter, may be eaſily imagined without a deſcription. But want and wearineſs are not the only evils, which they are often expoſed to. There are many others, and one in particular, which to thoſe among them, who have had a liberal education and retain any taſte for letters, or have a deſire to make themſelves more judicious and uſeful by diligent ſtudy, muſt be exceedingly diſagreeable: I mean the want of books; which in many ſituations they can neither buy nor borrow. For their employers have not the goodneſs to allot annually a little for this purpoſe; or elſe there might be parochial, at

leaſt there might be public libraries for the uſe of miniſters within a reaſonable diſtance. The intereſt of religion in the preſent ſtate of things requires ſuch a plan, and Piety may wiſh for it; but Hope muſt be ſilent.

It is the duty of every Biſhop to regulate the allowance for Vicarial ſervice within his dioceſe, and eſpecially when any thing of the kind is brought before him and comes judicially under his cognizance.

An old Beneficiary, of very unbecoming character, not long ago ſuffered one of his livings, which was worth above a hundred a year, to be without a miniſter for a conſiderable time, becauſe he would not allow his Curate five-and-twenty pounds a year. The pariſhioners complained that they had no ſervice at all for twenty Sundays in the ſpace of twelve months, notwithſtanding they got what aſſiſtance they could from the neighbouring clergy: all of whom have enough to do for themſelves; and ſome of them more than they ought. This infamous old fellow, however, though he lives South of the Trent, at laſt heard of a young man, ſomewhere not far from the borders of Scotland, who was thought to have learning enough to *get over* an examination for orders: it actually proved ſo, and he got him ordained

on a title for £. 35 a year. But when the young man came to his place of reſidence, he found that he was to ſerve another pariſh alſo, which was larger, and a more valuable living, and belonged to a different perſon, and all for the ſame ſalary of £. 35 a year. It happened that his caſe by ſome means or other was laid before the Biſhop and his attending Dignitaries, at a public Viſitation; who were unanimouſly of opinion that, if the young man had any friends, he might inſiſt on the whole ſalary, for ſerving the firſt pariſh, and have a [e] proper allowance if he ſerved the other: but unluckily the young man [f] had no friends, had neither merit nor ſpirit for any advancement;

[e] Blackſtone ſays, "If any Rector or Vicar nominates a "Curate to the Ordinary to be licenſed, the Ordinary ſhall "ſettle his ſtipend under his hand and ſeal, not exceeding "£ 50. per annum, nor leſs than £ 20. and on failure of "payment may ſequeſter the profits of the Benefice." He refers to the Stat. 12 Ann. ſt. ii. c. xii. How then could theſe conſcientious gentry think of permitting a perſon to ſerve two places under the very loweſt legal ſalary?

[f] Not a friend, and a *Chriſtian* Biſhop in the company! Why even in criminal matters every upright judge conſiders himſelf as advocate upon honour for every priſoner.—But it may be ſuppoſed that Biſhops would not be able to

ment; and it is ſtill the beſt thing he can do to officiate, like a purchaſed Negro, as the watering ſlave to a [g] trading Rector. And this accounts for the ſecond ordination of Solomon.

There have been Biſhops, that would not have ſuffered ſuch a foul tranſaction, with every mark of baſeneſs, treachery, and impoſition, about it, but horridly execrable when conſidered in its religious connection, and therefore it ought not to have eſcaped the moſt rigorous vengeance of law: there may be ſome now, that would have proceeded againſt the guilty delinquents with an exemplary ſeverity; "et "ne nominatim de omnibus dicam," as Spartian ſays, let it be enough to mention one.——But I cannot be certain. For the Prelate, whom I ſhould have depended on, becauſe he had the ſingular honour to give an honeſt vote on a ſpecial occaſion, was the very man, whoſe

mind their own buſineſs, if they were always to interfere ſo very officiouſly about other people's. For inſtance; ſhould ——— undertake to ſettle the ſtipends of all the neceſſitous and oppreſſed Curates within his Dioceſe, what a time muſt he have of it!

[g] Is the epithet offenſive? It is indeed in its preſent application ignominious enough to be ſo: and yet he deſerves a worſe.

con-

conſcience had not a regular influence, and let him connive at the wickedneſs.

It is well known that ſome Beneficiaries have as diſputable a title to the appellation of Divines as Solomon the ſimple Curate. And I could name one of this ſtamp, a Rector of two conſolidated pariſhes, in one of which is an old market-town, who accepted a donative in the ſame neighbourhood, which is not a ſinecure, but ſhould have ſervice every Sunday, and then the curacy of a fourth pariſh, and after that of a fifth, and yet is not qualified to be the reſponding clerk in any place where common decency is requiſite. The Rectorial income of this vile Pluraliſt is at leaſt £ 140. per annum, and he has no legitimate children.—But ſuch dangerous and diſgraceful violations of law would never be overlooked with that indifference they now are, was it not for the more criminal negligence and enormities of the ſuperior clergy.

It is certain there are many very ſcandalous inſtances of plurality, that might be produced at preſent among the grandees of the church. Let me only juſt take notice of two: they may be of ſervice, not indeed in the way of reformation, nor at all in the conviction of the criminals themſelves, who muſt have defied Heaven for

for the probability of this: but they may be of ſervice to ſome flattering Chaplain at leaſt, and give him a freſh opportunity to teſtify the ſincerity of his attachment.—The revenue of [h] ———, after all the defalcations, is ſtill equal to every thing but the expectations of pride or avarice: and two or three Biſhopricks, it may be preſumed, would not be adequate to the expectations of either. The impious old Stigand was ſo inſatiably covetous, that he could not be content with Canterbury and Winchester too; but held at the ſame time many Abbeys beſides, as [i] William of Malmeſbury aſſures us.

The church then is again, or rather continues ſtill, in a ſtate of degeneracy. Hypocrites have held faſt deceit, and, after all the vigorous efforts to accompliſh a real reformation, have been able to retain a conſiderable part of thoſe privileges, which had been granted by the moſt arbitrary and profligate of all the Popes in the moſt

[h] The ——— has been tranſlated to ——— lately, and the author will not avow that he is ſtill a Commendamiſt. In matter of fact, the evidence ſhould be full and clear, and probability not at all liſtened to.

[i] Vintoniæ Epiſcopatum et Cantuariæ Archiepiſcopatum, præterea multas Abbatias ſolus ipſe poſſidebat.

ſuper-

ſuperſtitious and abandoned ages. Diſpenſations and indulgences, a venal proſtitution of things ſpiritual, had been long complained of as ſhameful and opprobrious, before they excited the indignation of a prieſt-ridden people, and gave ſuch a general ſhock to the tyranny of papal Rome: for the ſons of avarice and ambition were engaged in a cloſe confederacy to defend their acquiſitions; ſo that every engine of policy, and every engine of power, was ſet to work; and every thing in ſhort was ſaid or done, that could poſſibly influence the affections of the people, and make them continue to have an implicit unreſerved reliance on the piety and principles of their conſecrated Shepherds. But the miſt of ignorance was ſoon diſpelled, which had ſo long enlarged every object of religion, when ſincerity and common ſenſe, like the ſun of righteouſneſs, aroſe together.

And yet it is not fair to accuſe the Popes of Rome, as if they were the only authors and abettors of corruption. For the church-men of different ages were all able enough to corrupt themſelves, without the countenance of any ſpecial authority. They and their adherents, however, would have you believe, that a deviation from ſtrict diſcipline is very juſtifiable.

ble. Family, or ſtation, or merit, will always be worthy of ſome diſtinction. But there are inſtances, that might be produced, where neither family, nor ſtation, nor merit, could have any pretenſions.—It may be ſo too; and if it be, they are then very apprehenſive that an attempt to rectify ſuch abuſes would be productive of greater.—It is but now and then that you meet with a wicked villain, who is ſuch a fool that he can ſay nothing for himſelf.

When the Jewiſh conſtitution was deplorably decayed, and reduced indeed to the laſt ſtage of corruption, Hezekiah iſſued a royal edict, and endeavoured to reſtore it to its original vigor. But juſtice and piety had been ſo long oppreſſed, they were become odious: the people of power and fortune therefore treated the attempt with inſolence and deriſion, and even oppoſed it with a rebellious outrage. Their condition, it ſeems, was ſtill eligible, and actually preferred to the probability of a better, when Iſaiah told them, "The whole head is ſick, "and the whole heart faint. From the ſole "of the foot even unto the head, there is no "ſoundneſs in it; but wounds and bruiſes and "putrifying ſores: they have not been cloſed, "neither bound up, neither mollified with "ointment." If this be thought hyperbolical,

the

the language of a Prophet that delighted in ſublime imagery, take an account of the ſame people in the language of a ſober Hiſtorian. Οἱ δὲ Ἰσραηλῖται, παραγενομένων τῶν πρέσβεων, καὶ δηλωσάντων αὐτοῖς τὰ παρὰ τοῦ ἰδίου βασιλέως, οὐ μόνον οὐκ ἐπείθησαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς πρέσβεις ὡς ἀνοήτους διεχλεύασαν, καὶ τοὺς προφήτας ὁμοίως ταῦτα παραινοῦντας, καὶ προλέγοντας ἃ πείσονται μὴ μεταθέμενοι πρὸς τὴν εὐσέβειαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, διέπλυον. καὶ τελευταῖον συλλαβόντες αὐτοὺς, ἀπέκτειναν. καὶ οὐδὲ μέχρι τούτων αὐτοῖς ἦρκεσε παρανομῆσιν. ἀλλὰ καὶ χείρω τῶν προειρημένων ἀπενοοῦντο. καὶ οὐ πρότερον ἐπαύσαντο, πρὶν ἢ τοῖς πολεμίοις, αὐτοὺς ἀμυνόμενος τῆς ἀσεβείας, ὁ Θεὸς ἐποίησεν ὑποχειρίους [k].

It is manifeſt from the moſt authentic teſtimonies, that the preſent diſcipline of the church of England is exceedingly corrupt: from the ſole of the foot even unto the head, from the humble half-ſtarved Curate unto the ſuperb

[k] Joſephi Antiq. Jud. lib. ix.

Iſraelitæ vero, cum adeſſent legati, regiſque ſui mandata illis expoſuiſſent, non modo non eis obſequuti ſunt, ſed etiam eos cum irriſione ut inſipientes exceperunt: et vates quoque eodem cohortantes, eiſque prædicentes quantæ calamitates inſtarent, ni *mature* ad pietatem erga Deum redirent, aſpernabantur et reſpuebant; tandemque comprehenſos morte multarunt: ac peccando eo uſque procedere non contenti erant, ſed etiam ex amentia in pejora iis, quæ ſupra retulimus, prolapſi ſunt flagitia: et non prius iſta facere deſliterunt, quam Deus eos pro ſceleribus ulciſcens in hoſtium poteſtatem tradidit.

luxu-

luxurious Prelate, there is no ſoundneſs in it. Can it be matter of wonder then, that in ſome places the pariſh churches ſhould be ſo deſerted, and at the ſame time a common itinerant can make himſelf popular and have a crouded congregation? It ſhould not ſurprize us, when we may obſerve ſuch a relaxation, I might ſay with greater truth ſuch a total decay of diſcipline, to find even

" A ſimple Quaker or a Quaker's wife
" Outdo Landaff in doctrine, yea, in life."

And it ſhould ſtill leſs ſurprize us, when we conſider with what predilection and attachment the Iſraelites adhered to their wicked cuſtoms, to meet with many apologiſts for this very diſcipline, who are ready to defend it, I won't ſay poſitively for the ſake of its faults, and have ſubſtantial reaſons for their preferring it to any other.—But a whining pietiſt, who is afraid that every alteration ſhould be for the worſe, was whiſpering ſomething the other day. —You ſay the church is betrayed, and robbed, and wounded, by the officers of her own guards: now if it be ſo, and you have not ability to relieve her, like the good Samaritan, would it not have been better only to have looked on and ſaid nothing, and then, like the

prudent

prudent Prieſt and Levite, have kept a reſpectful diſtance, and paſſed by on the other ſide?—I anſwered him in the words of the witty old Plautus,

" Sat habet favitorum ſemper, qui recte facit."

And he, that does wrong, let his rank or quality be what it will, ought to meet with oppoſers; ought to be expoſed at leaſt, if he cannot be puniſhed.

Nobody ever did, and, I hope, Nobody ever will, ſay that I fear the frowns of the great: and when the religion or liberty of my country ſhall ſeem in danger, Nobody ſhall deter me from avowing my ſentiments. Some enthuſiaſm was always neceſſary to keep alive that delicate exotic, public ſpirit; and I would not be without it for all that was ever gained by all the milk-white diſcretion in the world. [m] Ἡδὺ γὰρ ἐν πᾶσι τὸ ἐλεύθερον.—This was the opinion even of a Roman Emperor; though declared with a ſneer in a keen and ironical ſatire. Tacitus thought it a peculiar happineſs that he lived to ſee the time, when a man might think as he pleaſed, and ſpeak as he thought: " Rara tem-
" porum felicitate, ubi ſentire quæ velis, et
" quæ ſentias dicere licet." For he had known

[m] Juliani Miſopogon.

when it was otherwiſe; when hardly a dog durſt wag his tongue, leſt he ſhould be put to the torture for high treaſon. "Dedimus profecto "grande patientiæ documentum, et ſicut vetus "ætas vidit quid ultimum in libertate eſſet, "ita nos quid in ſervitute, adempto per in-"quiſitiones et loquendi audiendique commer-"cio."—It has always been the aim of arbitrary deſpots to deſtroy, if poſſible, the freedom of debate and converſation, as well as to ſuppreſs the publication of any offenſive truths: it never was enough to bow down the backs of the people, without breaking their ſpirit alſo. A ſage and experienced politician has laid it down as a maxim, that "oppreſſion will make a wiſe "man mad;" and as to a fool, any body may obſerve, that oppreſſion will make him grow from ſtupid to inſenſible. O the philanthropy of thoſe prieſts, who preach truly that paſſive obedience is a divine law, and ordained too in a revelation, which was made out of good-will towards men! but it is well known, that a very prieſt, like a very lawyer, will preach or plead on any ſide of any queſtion. If paſſive obedience be politically legal, and grounded on the Goſpel, it was ordained to be ſure, for the ſake of government, that men muſt either loſe their ſenſes, or not ſeem to have any: for, where the

ſpirit

ſpirit of deſpotiſm operates with a full effect, ſlaves muſt not have the conſolation to think themſelves miſerable. It would be too much to leave them the liberty of brutes, and let them bite their chains. [n] Ælian relates a moſt remarkable ſtory of this ſort. He ſays, there was a Tyrant, who made a law that no two perſons ſhould talk together on any ſubject, either in public or private: and when he found they defeated his purpoſe by expreſſive ſigns and geſtures, he prohibited too the leaſt muſcular diſtortion. And being after this informed, that a man ſtood weeping bitterly in the market-place, and that a great multitude had gathered round and were weeping with him, he went in haſte with a body of his guards, and was determined to puniſh them for their preſumption and licentiouſneſs. But the ſight of him inſpired them with courage; they fell upon the ſoldiers, diſarmed them, and ſlew the monſter. And may this be the fate of every great villain, that dare wantonly invade the liberties of mankind! "Let them periſh, that oppreſs the "people."

In England there are ſeveral of the venal tribe, who would ſay or do any thing for a

[n] Var. Hiſt. lib. xiv. c. 22.

place or a penſion, that have ſtrained every ſinew in purſuit of

" The Mountain Nymph, ſweet Liberty;"

and it is juſt the ſame to them whether a prince or a prieſt, a king or a pope, has the diſpoſal of what they want for their pains. But their acquiſitions would excite no reſentment, if they did not pretend to make them in an honourable way. It is their vindication of iniquity, that provokes the independent to unmaſk hypocriſy, and expoſe injuſtice: for it is not imagined that a conduct like theirs, which has been proſcribed ſo often by all religious, and honeſt, and good men, and even by themſelves, can ever be rendered more deteſtable, more dangerous and alarming, by any new combination of words.—Why don't they then imitate their couſins in corruption at Rome? have they not intereſt enough to obtain an act of parliament for an inquiſitorial review of all publications? An expurgatory index would preſerve them and all their ſucceſſors pure and immaculate from age to age. The Biſhops in particular ſeem to be in extreme want of ſuch a preſervative: it would keep them for ever modeſt, humble, devout, virtuous, free from malice, free from pride, free from avarice, free from hypocriſy, vigilant overſeers, and conſcientiouſly

ſteady

ſteady in the diſcharge of their duty. As things are now circumſtanced, if they really wanted to recommend epiſcopacy to the people of Scotland or America, they could only argue, like an officer of the Prætorian guards, when he recommended the Pagan religion to a Chriſtian confeſſor;

" Juſſum eſt Cæſaris ore Gallieni,
" Quod princeps colit, ut colamus omnes [1]."

But this advice is all thrown away: and had it been given in the moſt ſerious manner and with the higheſt perfume of piety, it is moſt probable that it would have met with the very ſame contempt, and have proved of as little utility. Many eminent men and infinitely my ſuperiors have failed before me: the vanity of this endeavour therefore can only make me ſay

" Explebo numerum reddarque tenebris."

I began with Nobody, and muſt end with Nothing.

SULPICIUS SEVERUS.

[1] Prudentius.

5 0659